

## ***House Republicans Introduce “Learn Here, Live Here” Initiative***

By State Representative Vincent Candelora

Last week, the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center released its new Chance for Success Index, and Connecticut ranked second among all states in educating its students for the workforce. Unfortunately, these students are leaving Connecticut after receiving their diplomas, and we have lost more people in the 18-34 year old range in the last decade than any other state. We need to stop the brain drain in Connecticut and retain our college students so that our workforce can thrive. Connecticut businesses have identified two issues, among others, that affect business and job growth; namely, the shrinking labor market to find qualified employees and the lack of affordable housing in Connecticut. To further that goal, the House Republicans have unveiled the “Learn Here, Live Here” initiative that proposes the creation of a trust fund in which participants can access up to 10 years after graduating college in order to purchase a home.

One of the pressures facing Connecticut’s business and job growth is the lack of affordable housing. How often do you hear of students leaving Connecticut because they cannot afford to make a living here? If you are not provided the good fortune of having parents who will take you back after college (in my case, it took only some mild coercion), recent graduates are faced with the decision of leaving Connecticut; thus, creating a viscous cycle of draining Connecticut’s future workforce.

The program would allow Connecticut college graduates, beginning with the 2007 class, to contribute the lesser of their state income tax liability or \$3,000 into a First-Time Homebuyer Trust Fund each year for ten years. The money can be withdrawn anytime over those years for the purchase of a home. Any interest income would be deposited annually into the state’s general fund to offset some of the costs of the program.

Connecticut must invest its future in the youth of our state. Too often, we hear parents and the business community who struggle to retain good employees. Learn Here, Live Here addresses the concerns of affordable housing in Connecticut and will assure job creation and growth for the Connecticut.